

POLICY FOR GENDER EQUITY IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

1. Purpose

The policy of gender equity affirms that women and men are to be considered as equally eligible for positions of leadership in Lutheran schools and so should be given equal opportunities to develop the gift of leadership and to serve in positions of responsibility.

The purpose of this policy therefore is to actively promote the equal participation of women and men in the principalship; positions of added responsibility or management; governance including the chair; school, district and national committees; and in system directorships.

2. The context of the Lutheran school

The Christian approach to the issue of equity and justice in relationships between women and men is grounded in the Scriptures. Both women and men are made in the image and the likeness of God (Genesis 1:27), and both are equally joined to Christ (Galatians 3:27-28).

We value the dignity of each individual person in the Lutheran school because all are created in the image of God. For the same reason we affirm the talents of all staff members. We acknowledge and encourage the potential for service of all.

Lutheran social teaching promotes the principle of basic equality between all people and rejects all forms of social and cultural discrimination in basic rights on the basis of gender, ethnicity, social conditions or religion.

The church requires the Lutheran school to employ staff who are skilled and registered educators, are able to uphold the teachings of the church and model the Christian lifestyle.

3. The policy

This policy is based on a vision of equity in employment across the whole spectrum of Lutheran education from pre-service orientation and preparation through employment in schools and systems.

Those aspiring to leadership positions should have equal access to and encouragement towards those work experiences and training opportunities, both formal and informal, which promote responsibility and leadership at all levels of management and governance.

We affirm the right to work as inalienable and recognise the right of women and men to be equally valued and to be given equal opportunity in employment. Benefits and conditions should be equitable for both men and women, and reflect a willingness to adopt family – friendly practices.

Our Lutheran belief encourages opportunities to develop participative, inclusive and caring structures and processes in all of our schools and systems. Membership of any decision making body needs to be comprised of women and men with appropriate skills and experience. Preparation should be offered to people for such membership. Those practices and structures which support values of inclusiveness and reinforce principles of justice and equity are encouraged.

Employment processes and procedures should reflect the entitlement of women, in their own right, to personal respect, to economic security and to participation in and influence over decisions which affect their personal lives.

We urge all involved in Lutheran education, employing authorities (national, district and school councils), principals, staff, parents and students, to reflect on the differing social realities of the lives of men and women, and to devise strategies for corrective action where injustice is recognised.

Thus all schools should develop a policy on gender equity in keeping with the priorities enunciated in this document.

4. Family - friendly supporting policies

Lutheran Education Australia urges all schools and administrative units to positively promote this policy through ensuring:

- affirmation of staff families
- enterprise agreements that reflect the work needs of all employees
- consideration of job share as an option
- availability of family care leave
- consideration for staff seeking access to adequate childcare
- consideration of staff family responsibilities

5. Elimination of discrimination

Lutheran Education Australia advocates the elimination of those practices and attitudes which inhibit the advancement of this policy. In particular it requests all schools and administrative units to:

- use inclusive language and have a policy to this effect
- eliminate all attitudes and practices that reflect a gender orientation and discrimination
- reflect national and state legislative requirements regarding discrimination against women, eg, pregnancy and breast feeding

6. General encouragement

Lutheran Education Australia requests principals and directors to establish practices which address the current gender imbalance in leadership, and which encourage and support the appointment of women to leadership positions by:

- inviting and challenging specific women to apply for positions of responsibility in Lutheran schools
- generally encouraging applications from women
- establishing mentoring arrangements
- inviting and challenging specific women to accept appointment to committees and governing bodies

7. Procedures for appointment of staff

Lutheran Education Australia requests all employing authorities to ensure that:

- all legislative requirements are understood and implemented
- there is gender balance on interview panels
- interviews use non-discriminatory protocols and questions
- position documentation and advertising are gender inclusive

8. Targets

- Lutheran Education Australia requests all districts, school councils and school management teams to commit to the achievement of national targets in gender equity.

Glossary:

School	The term 'school' refers to either a primary school, a secondary school, a college, a kindergarten, a preschool, a childcare centre, etc.
Principal	The term 'principal' refers to those who have the chief executive function at a school. This person may be a principal, a director, a headmaster, a head of college, etc.